AARP Montana

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 3-7-05
HB 742

March 7, 2005

TO: Chair Rep. Becker and Members of the House Human Services Committee

FROM: Robert Speirer, Volunteer Advocate, AARP Montana

RE: Support of HB 742, registry for declarations of life sustaining treatment

Madame Chair and members of the committee for the record my name is Robert Speirer, volunteer advocate for AARP Montana. AARP is a non-profit, non-partisan organization with 143,000 members in Montana.

We support HB 742 because we understand the importance of advance directives, such as living wills and durable powers of attorney. These documents allow an individual, while still competent, to make his or her own decisions about medical treatment and may allow family members to be included in making these important decisions. It is not practical to individually file advance directives with every hospital or clinic in Montana. Our health care system in Montana is diverse, so patients can find themselves referred to many different facilities for specialized care. This bill would greatly simplify the system of filing an advanced directive.

Access to these documents is especially important to ensure terminally ill patients are treated with dignity and permitted to refuse medical treatment. Respect for the wishes of dying patients is as critical as for the patient who is expected to recover. There is increasing evidence, however, that health care providers and institutions fail to implement the decisions of competent patients. By providing wider availability of advanced directives, health care providers can better follow the wishes of their patients.

Please support HB 742 and its mission to help people when most vulnerable.

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